

## Fairfax County Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan March 31 Task Force Meeting Google Form Response Summary

In April, members of the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan Focus Groups and Task Force were asked to complete an online survey in lieu of an in-person discussion of [the materials shared on March 31](#). These materials included a draft updated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory for Fairfax County as well as a list of possible scenarios for consideration in the goal setting process. Below are the questions asked of participants in this survey, along with summaries of their responses. A detailed account of the comments and questions raised by participants and the responses to their questions is below, and in an [accompanying document for Questions 1a and 1b](#).

*Question 1a: The recorded presentation and meeting materials provide information about Fairfax's GHG inventory, business-as-usual projections, and illustrative reduction scenarios. What questions do you have about these materials?*

[Please see detailed comments and responses to Question 1a here.](#)

*Question 1b: The recorded presentation provided information about goal setting. What questions do you have about goal setting?*

[Please see detailed comments and responses to Question 1b here.](#)

*Question 2a: In the next stage of work, we need to begin prioritizing scenarios for deeper analysis. Please rank the scenarios in order of priority for further analysis. (Ranking of five scenario choices)*

*List of scenarios:*

- *A - Low-moderate reduction scenario for both energy and transportation*
- *B - More aggressive reduction scenario for both energy and transportation*
- *C - Net Zero Grid and Low Carbon Transportation Scenario*
- *D - Net Zero Grid, High Penetration of Low Carbon Gas, and Low Carbon Transportation Scenario*
- *E - 80x50 Scenario including Net Zero Grid, High Penetration of Low Carbon Gas, Low Carbon Transportation and Elimination of HFCs Scenario*

The vast majority ranked Scenario E as their first priority (over 70%), with D, C, B, and A following. This indicates that the current group preference is to pursue more aggressive goals.

*Question 2b: Are there other scenarios you would like to see considered in the next round of analysis?*

Again, the vast majority advocated for more aggressive goal setting, and were concerned primarily with whether Scenario E was sufficient to attain a significant impact on GHG emissions reductions. Specific elements that were called out include:

- Achieving Paris Agreement goals
- Carbon neutrality/net zero carbon output
- Clean energy and carbon emissions pricing
- Advocating for reductions without relying on offsets/renewable energy credits
- Concerns about landfill emissions/goal setting for this sector
- Transportation sector issues/electrification/stay-at-home impacts

*Question 3: A target year establishes a timeframe by which the GHG reduction goal should be achieved. What should be our target year? See slide 62 for more information about target year selection.*

The group was almost evenly split on whether the target year should be before 2050, or 2050. A few individuals proposed alternate evaluation cycles.

*Question 4: Interim year goals provide an opportunity to assess progress toward the target year goal. What year(s) should be set for interim year goals? See slide 62 for more information about interim year goal selection.*

The overwhelming majority indicated that very frequent (every five years) interim goals were preferable.

*Question 5a: Is it more important for Fairfax County's target year goal to be attainable or aspirational? See slide 64 for definitions of each.*

A slight majority of the group preferred to have attainable rather than aspirational goals.

*Question 5b: What is your rationale for your answer in 5a?*

Responses to this question gave a great deal of insight into the attitudes of the group. Specific themes emerged:

- Concern with ensuring that goals can be met
- Recognition that the plan will need to be continually updated as technology and conditions change and what was once only aspirational may become attainable in the future

- Acknowledgement that interim goals should be attainable, with further year goals as aspirational at the current time/conditions
- Desire to address the climate change issues with the most aggressive stance and a feeling of urgency
- Recognition of future uncertainty regarding outside conditions not directly related to CECAP/climate change
- Concern that aspirational goals are needed for motivation and actual change in behavior /desire to not limit effort and outcomes
- Concern that goals need to be attainable or individual action will feel hopeless and motivation will be lost/desire to see measurable change and outcomes
- Acknowledgement that attainable goals are needed to start, with aspirational goals needed in the end

*Question 6a: Should the plan include sector-specific goals? See slide 66 for more information about sector-specific goals and slide 69 for examples of sector-specific goals.*

The vast majority of the group felt that the plan should include sector-specific goals. A few additional comments mentioned the need to have sector-specific goals only if they are useful to measure progress or reach interim goals.

*Question 6b: If you selected "Yes, the plan should include sector-specific goals," which sectors should have goals?*

There was no clear majority indicated by the group. Many felt that we should focus on the sectors that are the largest emitters in Fairfax County, others preferred addressing all sectors available. A few comments also mentioned the relationship of mitigation (the CECAP) with potential plans for climate adaptation and resiliency.

*Question 7: Do you have any feedback on the presentation materials that was not captured in the questions above?*

Many themes emerged:

- More information on the scenarios is needed to fully understand the implications and how they relate to goals we might set
- How to best communicate the information that the Task Force and Focus Group members have received to the public/ensuring the public's understanding and participation with the CECAP
- The need for an accurate and actionable CECAP that is assessed and updated regularly and for information on progress toward interim goals to be made available
- Additional information is needed to continue the discussion, specifically:
  - Deeper discussion of background information sources and methodologies/possible failings of the methodologies

- Economic implications/cost of implementation/cost of inaction/cost in other jurisdictions
- Legislation restrictions/role of state and federal government/current state laws and their potential effects/Board of Supervisors' level of involvement and support
- The role of carbon offsets
- Resilience and adaption strategies that could be integrated
- Integration of some of the presented information into future goalsetting and strategic discussions
- Aviation emissions data
- The role of local government operations and purchasing
- Further clarification of sector-specific goals/information on why not all plans have these goals, and on potential tradeoffs
- The role of carbon sequestration/green infrastructure/land development
- Further information/discussion of other COG member governments with ambitious climate plan goals
- How Fairfax County will implement the plan
- Can elements of CECAP be implemented sooner than formal plan adoption
- How transportation sector goals can be addressed beyond fuel and vehicle choice

*Question 8: What questions or comments do you have about the CECAP development process (e.g., virtual process as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, website, level of communication, etc.)?*

The vast majority of the respondents were pleased with the process changes (the virtual March 31<sup>st</sup> meeting), but voiced support for waiting to meet or putting the entire process on hold rather than meeting virtually, emphasizing the value of in-person discussions. However, a minority felt that meetings should continue virtually for as long as needed rather than disrupt the scheduled timeline for CECAP.

Participants also recognized many of the challenges involved in switching to a virtual format. Some voiced concerns regarding how we might best be able to move forward in uncertain times, and how to best engage the community, including groups that participants are personally engaged with, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants offered many suggestions and preferences for moving forward virtually, if there is no option for in-person meeting.